1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

In retrospect it is plain that 24th September was the day when best results would have been obtained, but after the consistently bad weather of late August and early September and with the imminence of the wet season, no farmer was in a mood for running risks. As we have seen most of the community took a panic decision and fired their farms on 14th September, after little more than two days of sunshine; in all these cases the burn was a bad one. Three *bilek* families, however, who were working *damun* land in the lower Sungai Nyunggau, did hold on until 21st September, and obtained burns which were a very marked improvement on those of the rest of the house. During this critical period the Iban often sought my advice, asking if Europeans did not have some method of controlling the rain, or, at least, of foretelling the weather. But without proper meteorological forecasts nothing could be done to help them, and one was made keenly aware of the uncertainty that besets the primitive cultivator. For him, the forces of nature are fickle and unpredictable, and the magic and ritual to which he has recourse are the best stratagems he knows for coping with problems that are essentially intractable. And the uncertainty is sharpened by the fact that the very subsistence of a man and his family depends on the sort of solution that is reached.

96. During 1949, several long-houses in the headwaters of the Sungai Sut succeeded in firing their farms early in August, before the deterioration of the weather, and they had completed the sowing of their *padi* before the first of the burns at Rumah Nyala took place. From all accounts this sort of thing is a commonplace occurrence. Farms may be fired at any time from early August to late September, and within each district it is usual to find a considerable range of variation in the dates on which farms are fired. Indeed, when the *dampa* system is being followed, there is sometimes a gap of a month or more, between *dampa* groups within the same long-house community.

97. Should the farm of a *bilek* family stand all alone on its hill-side, its owners may fire it whenever they think fit, though it is usual to make a public announcement of their plans. When farms have common boundaries with one another, on the other hand, it is obligatory for all the *bilek* families concerned to confer together, and come to a common decision. This is necessary for two main reasons: (*a*) to avoid the possibility of accident, for in a dry season the blaze can spread with such speed that persons on adjoining farms may be trapped and burnt to death;[1] and (*b*) to avert the danger of the blaze spreading and causing damage to the ritual whet stone (*batu manggol*) of another *bilek* family—a serious offence this.

98. To fire (*nunu*, v.f. *nunu*) a farm, large torches (*sempun*) of lashed bark are used. These torches, which have been prepared in advance, are lit at the *dampa*, and the men of each *bilek* family hurry off to the foot of their *umai*. Without delay, but in silence, the fire is started in three separate places; then, shouting at the top of his voice, each man calls upon the Wind Spirits to fling themselves upon the farm, and the Fire Spirits to devour every branch and bough, and leave nothing but ashes behind them.[2] After a drought (*kamarau*) of three weeks or

[1]The Iban tell stories of this happening, and a number of cases of men being 'burnt alive' during the firing of the farms are recorded in the "Sarawak Gazette"; e.g. 1893, p. 171, and 1901, p. 237.

[2]As an example of the prayers (*sampi*), which are uttered at the firing of a farm, let me quote the following version collected at Rumah Nyala in 1949:
"Oh Wind Spirits where are you?
Oh call, oh summon your kith and your kin, your offspring, your people all;

1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

more, the blaze sweeps across a farm with extraordinary speed and ferocity, the flames leaping and roaring high into the air, and after a few hours little remains, even of an *umai* hewn out of virgin jungle. This, at least, is what the Iban claim, and judging from the burnt out stumps of massive trees, which I was shown (relics these, of dry season firings), it is no exaggeration. The firings which I in fact witnessed, were much more protracted and less spectacular affairs. In 1949, in particular, the season was an adverse one; here and there accumulations of leaves and branches flared up strongly, but the flames would not spread far of their own accord, and it became necessary to start scores of small fires in different parts of the farm. With remarkable agility the Iban clambered bare-foot from log to log, flourishing their smouldering torches in the air; skilfully avoiding burning patches they sought out untouched enclaves, and so fire after fire was kindled to the accompaniment of a high-pitched trilling cry—a cry to encourage the wind. Everywhere there were islands of intermittent flame, each with its own column of grey or yellowish-white smoke drifting up to form an opaque haze, through which the tropical sun dimly shone. But when the fires had died down, the farm was still thickly strewn with trees, so that from a distance of a few hundred yards, one wondered if the burn had taken place after all.

99. Within two or three days of the burn the sowing begins. For the Iban this is an important occasion, and a series of rites are meticulously performed as the first *padi* seed is planted. If the burn has been a good one, the process of sowing is greatly simplified, for the *tegalan*, as the surface of the farm is called after firing, is free of obstructing branches and debris, and there is a copious bed of ash to receive the seed. A bad burn, on the other hand, forces a good deal of extra work upon the unfortunate farmer, for, before he can dibble in his seed, he must first clear the ground of accumulations of unburnt brushwood that threaten to choke and encumber the growing *padi*. This operation of continuing with clearing after the burn is known as *ngebak*. In 1949, at Rumah Nyala, so much time had to be spent in *ngebak*, that most farmers were able to sow only about 80% of the area which they had felled, and in some cases little more than half of the farm was sown. In doing *ngebak*, the farmer is concerned not in producing ash, but merely in clearing the surface of unwanted debris. If his farm contains a rocky gully, he will use this as a dump, gathering up unburnt boughs and flinging them into it. In other places he may be compelled to hack up the smaller branches with his bush-knife, and build a series of bonfires (Plate 9). In passing, it may be noted that the Iban make no attempt to scatter ash (*abus*) over the surface of the farm. Ash is recognized as beneficial—I have heard Iban attribute luxuriance of growth to the fact that a particular clump of *padi* was planted in an ash heap—but the effort involved in scattering ash over the ground is not deemed to be worthwhile. Nor is there any attempt systematically to stack branches prior to burning (as in the *icitemene* cultivation of Central Africa), so as to produce an even distribution of ash.

Come from Sarawak and from Pontianak,
Come from Brunei, and the far away ocean.
Oh dash yourselves against my farm,
Fling up the debris, tear up the roots,
Roll over the logs, hurl down the buttress roots,
Devour outright, devour utterly,
Leave no remains, no stumps unburnt,
Leave not a branch, not a bough but in ashes.
Kor-r-r-r-r . . . . Wind and fire
Do your devouring!

1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

9. After the firing of the farms: the burn has been a bad one and to clear the land for sowing the farmer is gathering scattered branches and making bonfires of them. This operation is called *ngebak*. Photograph taken on 3rd October, 1949; Sungai Sut, Kapit District.

10. Dibbling taking place. The man is wearing a loin-cloth (*sirat*), the traditional garment of Iban males. Photograph taken on 15th October, 1949; Sungai Sut, Kapit District.

11. An Iban woman sowing *padi*. The burn has been an exceedingly poor one, but the farmers have no recourse but to sow their *padi* amid the fallen timber that still covers the land. The woman is wearing a sun-hat (*tanggi*). Photograph taken on 3rd September, 1949; Sungai Saban, Ulu Sut, Kapit District.

12. A young Iban girl amid ripening *padi*; on another part of the farm reaping is already in progress. The stumps are those of virgin jungle (*kampong*), and beyond lie the hills of the Mujong. Photograph taken on 21st February, 1951; Sungai Sut, Kapit District.

13. A young man setting a spear-trap (*peti*) at the edge of his farm to protect it from wild pigs. He is wearing a hand-woven jacket (*kelambi*). Photograph taken on 4th March, 1950; Sungai Sut, Kapit District.

14. A watch-house (*langkau umai*); with walls and roofing of bark, it is strategically placed in the centre of the farm. In the foreground young *padi* is springing up. Against the front wall of the hut a tying-frame (used in *ikat* weaving) is leaning. Photograph taken on 21st February, 1951; Sungai Sut, Kapit District.

15. An Iban woman guarding her farm. The *padi* in the background—the second successive crop from virgin jungle—has already been reaped. Photograph taken on 20th February, 1951; Sungai Sut, Kapit District.

16. Reaping in progress: the woman is gathering the panicles one by one and placing them in the reaping-basket (*sintong*) which is fastened about her waist. (The *padi* shown here is that of a test plot which gave a yield equivalent to 42·8 bushels per acre). Photograph taken on 24th April, 1950; Sungai Sut, Kapit District.

17. After reaping the *padi* is packed in large carrying baskets (*lanji*) and transported back to the *dampa* or long-house to be threshed. Photograph taken on 22nd April, 1950; Sungai Sut, Kapit District.

18. Winnowing taking place on the open platform (*tanju*) of a farm house (*dampa*). One woman pours the threshed grain from a basket (*baka*) while the other fans with a winnowing tray (*chapan*). Photograph taken on 12th April, 1950; Sungai Sut, Kapit District.

19. A woman planting *sengkenyang*—magical plants which are believed to watch over and minister to the needs of the growing *padi*. They are planted close to the sacred rice (*padi pun*) in the centre of the farm. Photograph taken on 15th October, 1949; Sungai Sut, Kapit District.

20. An old man and his daughter making an offering to the *padi* spirits (*antu padi*) during a *nganjong ka penyadai* ritual. This important ritual inaugurates the harvest. The offering (*piring*) can be seen resting on the ground between the two officiants. Photograph taken on 7th March, 1950; Sungai Sut, Kapit District.

21. In the reaping basket (*sintong*) which this young man is carrying is the seed (*benih*) of the sacred rice (*padi pun*) of his *bilek* family. Dressed in an *ikat* jacket, worn in honour of the sacred rice, he is taking part in a ritual to celebrate the conclusion of the harvest. Photograph taken on 20th May, 1950; Sungai Sut, Kapit District.

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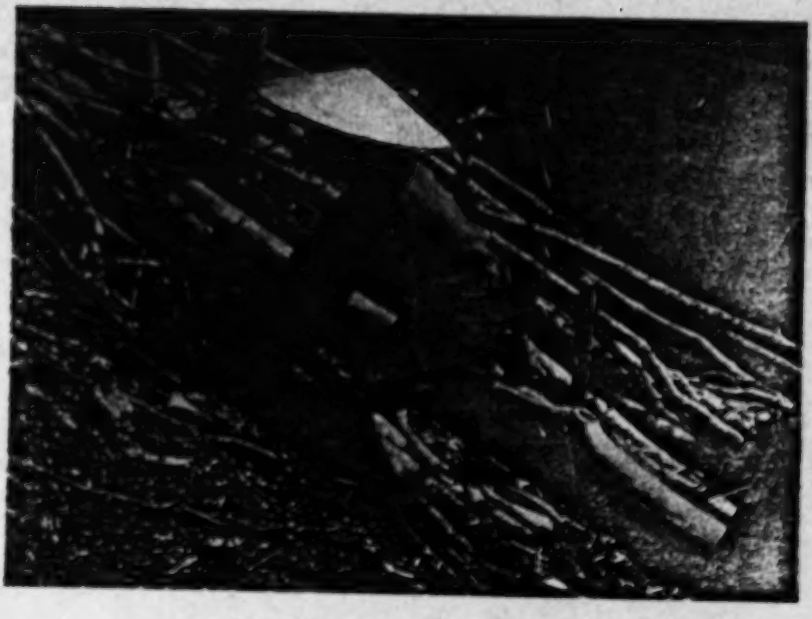

Plate 9. Secondary burning (*ngebak*).

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Plate 10. Dibbling in progress.

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
OC6 Iban OC6

the white tail feathers, each having a broad black band across it, of the rhinoceros hornbill, are preferred; they have no covering or protection for their thighs or legs, but leave them as on ordinary occasions; their parang, or large chopping knife, is suspended from their left sides, and another string supports on the opposite side the little basket which contains their sirih leaves, betel-nut, and lime, for chewing; these are placed in little cases of bamboo ornamented with brass or silver, and very much carved, but after a very rude manner. A similar bamboo case, and which is generally also carried in this little tambuk, or basket, contains their tinder, flint, and steel; a long knife is generally attached to it.

The women of these tribes are, like their husbands and brothers, short in stature, generally more stoutly made than the Malay women, and with well-developed figures; they are very much fairer than they, or even than the men of their own tribes: while young many of them would be thought very pretty, but soon, from their hard duties and other causes, they become stout and plain, and when old are frequently very ugly. When brought up amongst the Malays they continue much longer in their prime, and are generally thought prettier than the women of that nation: their hair, though naturally as good, from want of care and cultivation never attains such length and profusion amongst those who reside in their own villages, though in circumstances which give them time for the adorn-

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
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the flesh of animals, as amongst the inland tribes. Nearly all the beasts of the forest are eaten by these people, even monkeys, alligators (if small), snakes and other reptiles are esteemed. Like the French, they regard frogs as a delicate dish, and bestow considerable pains in procuring them: their rice is cooked in brass or earthen pots, called priuks, which they purchase from the Malays; and plates of English manufacture have recently become very general among them. They eat from the plates with their right hand, compressing the rice (which is not cooked dry as that of the Malays) into a ball of convenient size. They know no way of cooking flesh but by boiling it, which they do in bamboos, having previously cut the whole animal into small pieces.

I once saw some Dyaks roasting a monkey, but did not stay to observe whether they did not boil it afterwards, as they generally partially roast these animals to free them from the hair. They have very little idea of flavouring their food except with salt, though they sometimes employ chilis, or small capsicums, turmeric, and ginger for that purpose. The Sebooyohs, who have lived more intimately with the Malays than the other tribes, have very much improved upon their cooking, the methods having been copied from their Mahometan neighbours. As they have no occasion for fire except for the purposes of cooking, their houses have no chimney, and the little smoke which is created finds its way through

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
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the crevices of the roof; and, as they rarely, with the exception of the Sebooyohs, who affect Malayan habits, indulge in the luxury of mosquito curtains, the smoke is rather beneficial than otherwise, as it protects them in some measure from the attacks of these tormenting insects, which, though not numerous in the interior, are, with sand-flies, very abundant on the sea-shore. They generally carry with them in their tambuk a flint and steel, for the purpose of making fire; but should these not be with them, but little difficulty is experienced in obtaining it from two pieces of bamboo, or by friction of a hard and soft stick, the latter of which soon takes fire.

The whole of the sea tribes dispose of their dead by burial, which, together with their not abstaining from the flesh of animals, induces me to suppose that the Hindu religion never influenced them, as it evidently has the land tribes; or that, if they knew any thing of its institutions, the impressions having been less strong have been by time altogether removed. A person having died, the manang, or doctor, who has been in attendance during the sickness, has also the superintendence of the interment, and the grave being prepared, the body of the deceased, dressed in his finest apparel, is placed in it, together with his sword, spear, gongs, and other property: if the family has been rich, the ornaments of gold and silver are added, and frequently a sum of money, amounting to forty or fifty dollars, in addition, and the earth covers the whole.

5: Roth E-4 (no date) 1892 CC6 Iban CC6

three days in succession until they hear either a note of warning to keep away from it, or a note of encouragement to remain on it. If the auguries are favourable they proceed to denude the land of its forest. Both sexes share in this labour; the women and boys clear away the undergrowth and the men fell the trees. Much valuable timber is then destroyed, as they spare only such fruit trees as are in full bearing, and those upon which the bees settle and from which they expect to be able to gather wild honey. As some of the trees are of enormous girth being furnished with buttresses, they do not always fell them at the base, but more often some distance up the trunk: others they leave standing altogether, merely lopping off the boughs to feed the fire which is afterwards to lay bare the ground and manure the soil.

When the land has been fully cleared it is left to dry. Sun and wind are now of almost vital consequence to the Dyaks, for if they are unable to thoroughly burn this immense mass of timber, famine stares them in the face for the year to come. If it pour with rain day after day and week after week, and there is no promise of continued fine weather, they are apt to imagine that some impurity has defiled the tribe and that the face of the Great Spirit is hid from them. So the elders of the people get to work to find it out, and adjudicate on all cases of incest and bigamy, and purify the earth with the blood of pigs. Prayers are offered to *Betara* from one end of the country to the other; for the space of three days the villages are tabued, and all labour is discontinued; the inhabitants remain at home, and strangers are not admitted. But if the weather is warm and dry the farms are ready in a very few days for the burning. They are set on fire from the windward side when the breeze is blowing, and soon the entire mass is seething with flames. It is a magnificent spectacle to behold when several of these farms are ablaze at once, and the hills are flaring like volcanoes. The heat at this season caused by the universal burning is almost insupportable; for days not a glimpse is to be caught of the blue sky overhead; the smoke hangs over the country like a heavy cloud, and the sun glows through the fog like a globe of molten copper.

When the fire has exhausted itself and the ground is again cool, which it soon is from the frequency of rain in this country, they commence to sow the seed. The men traverse the farm with dibblers in their hands and dibble the ground; the women follow and drop in the paddy seed and cover up the holes by scraping earth into them with their feet. Indian corn (*lingkau*) is planted sparingly at the same time: and as it is ripe and off the ground within three months from the date of the sowing, it does not

5: Roth E-4 (no date) 1892 OC6 Iban OC6

out the smoke or to admit the fresh air. If the neighbours are near relations or intimate friends, as is often the case, a hole is cut in the wall which separates the room to avoid the necessity of a roundabout way into one anothers' apartments, and some villages are so arranged that one can traverse the entire length of the rear section of the building by means of these apertures without appearing on the verandah at all. There is no furniture in the room—none in fact being required. The floor is the occupiers' table and they squat to their meals. But there are plenty of mats to sit upon and baskets to pack their clothes in. Their cups and plates are hung in rows upon the walls as much for ornament as for use. Their valuables, such as old jars, gongs, etc., are ranged on three sides so as to present the most imposing appearance of wealth.

But the room is stuffy and untidy, and no wonder, seeing that there is but one for each family and this one is used as a kitchen as well as a mess room, as a nursery as well as a bed chamber. There can be no absolute privacy unless the door is barred to exclude the neighbours. Boys and girls keep running in and out and the dogs are always on the watch in the *tempuan* to spring in whenever the door swings open. The floor is swept after a fashion but the room is never deserted, and the roof is simply black with soot. The refuse is thrown into the piggery and poultry yard, which occupies the area or waste space under the house. Very little stench, if any, reaches the apartment from the ground, as the floor is raised too high above it to be affected by it. The *dapur* or fire-place is the only real piece of furniture in the room. It is built either to the right or to the left of the door set up against the wall of the *tempuan* and resembles an open cupboard, the lowest shelf resting upon the floor and the upper shelves being of lattice work instead of plank. The former is boarded all round and filled with clay. This is the fireplace and it is furnished with a few stones between which the pots are set. The shelf immediately above the fire is set apart for smoking fish and meat, etc. The shelves above this again are filled with firewood which being thoroughly dried is ready for use. The women, who do all the cooking, have also to keep these shelves supplied from the pile in the *tempuan*. As the smoke from the wood fire is not conducted to the roof by means of a chimney it spreads itself throughout the loft and blackens the beams and rafters until it finds its way out by the open window.[1]

[1] Elsewhere B. L. says: "They make a *palan* or raised platform and under it light a fire and heap it with dry twigs and fill the platform with split wood for drying as *bekal* (firewood). From the fire they take brands for other fires. They drive three pegs into the ground and place *prion* (jar) on top, fill

5: Roth E-4 (no date) 1892 CC6 Iban CC6

The *tempuan* or general thoroughfare is between the *bilieh* and the *ruai*. It is three feet in width and is paved with wood. It is furnished with a ladder or notched stick by which to reach the loft, a family mortar where the women pound their paddy with wooden pestles to free it from the husk, and a pile or two of firewood reared by the men for use inside. This passage is also used by the women to winnow their rice in, feed their dogs, and attend to their chickens, and by the men to wash the dirt off their feet when they come home from their work. The wall of the *tempuan* is sometimes elaborately painted in various patterns, and the spears of the family are thrust into the skirting board so as to be handy.

The *ruai* or verandah is in front of the *tempuan* and is as nearly as possible the same size as the *bilieh* from which it differs principally in being open on all sides and without any partition. It is therefore a cooler and more agreeable place and as such is frequented by both sexes for the purposes of conversation, discussion, and indoor pursuits. Female visitors are usually received in the *bilieh*, but male visitors are invariably received in the *ruai* and only enter the bilieh when invited to do so to be introduced to the women and to share the meals. They sleep in the *ruai* along with the boys and bachelors, and sit there all day when they have nothing better to do, conversing with the head of the family and chewing betel. The floor is carpeted with thick and heavy mats of cane interlaced with narrow strips of beaten bark. Over these are spread other mats of thinner and finer texture. There is a small fireplace between this and the next *ruai* for the men to warm themselves at when they get up, as they usually do, in the chill of the morning, before the sun has risen above the trees; the fire is allowed to go out in the middle of the day, but is revived towards the evening when it is getting dark, but still too early to light the torches.

Some *ruais* are provided with a *panggan* or bedstead with plank sides in one corner of the room for the men to sleep in, but this is not always the case. If the head of the family has made it for his own use and if he be a chief or rich man he will fix his gongs of various kinds around it for the sake of show; his weapons will be within reach and his war dress will hang from the roof where it can be seen to best advantage —a skull cap of wickerwork with its nodding plumes, and a skin jacket decorated with the tail feathers of the war bird of the tribe. But the most valuable ornament in the *ruai* by far is

quarter with rice and fill up with water and when it simmers cover it with leaves. Before the arrival of Europeans the Dyaks used earthen *prions* made by themselves."

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

764 in the grave. Jars and brass gongs are not buried with the corpse, but placed on the grave. When all this has been done, the grave is fenced round, and food and drink are placed in the enclosure, and at either end something is put to indicate the sex and favourite occupation of the deceased. If the grave be that of a warrior, it is roofed and decorated with streamers, and such of his weapons as are not buried with him are hung about, and the ground around is palisaded and spiked. The grave of the hunter is distinguished by his blow-pipe and quiver, together with the trophies of the chase—stags' antlers and boars' tusks. Some article of feminine attire or work—spindles or petticoats, or waist-rings or water-gourds—indicate the graves of women. The graves of the rich have valuable jars or gongs, which are secured in their places by having a stake driven through them and thus rendered worthless.

A lighted torch is always carried to a funeral, and when the body is buried it is extinguished at the grave.

The articles which are buried with the dead person or put upon the grave are called *baiya*. They are for the use of the spirit in the other world. The Dyaks argue that though the articles placed on the grave remain there, still the spirit of these articles are of use to the soul in Hades, and so their gifts are not wasted.

Those of the mourners who leave the grave last plant sharpened stakes in the ground, so that the spirit of the dead man may not follow them back to the Dyak house, the stakes planted in the ground being supposed to prevent his return.

764 372 At sunset on the day of death, a fire is lit at the landing-place on the bank of the river near the house of the dead man. This fire is kept burning all night. For three or

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

four evenings after death they light a fire either at the landing-place or somewhere outside the house. This is for the use of the departed, for in Hades fire is not to be procured without paying for it, and if the dead find any difficulty about obtaining fire, they can come and fetch it from the fire lit by their earthly friends. This idea does not seem consistent with the many things done to prevent the soul of the dead man finding his way back to his earthly home. 764 372

When there is a death among the Dyaks, none of the inmates of the house do any farm work on the day of the funeral. In the case of the death of a Chief, they refrain from work for three days or even more. 765

When anyone dies, the *ulit*, or mourning, has to be observed by the immediate relatives of the deceased, and continues until the feast in honour of the dead (*Gawai Antu*) is held. All the finery and bright articles of apparel belonging to the relatives are tied up in a bundle and put away. At the *Gawai Antu* the string which binds this bundle together is cut by the headman of the house, and they may use their bright garments again. The mourning (*ulit*) includes many other restrictions beside the prohibition of ornaments and bright-coloured clothing. There must be no striking of gongs or drums or dancing or merrymaking in the house. In the old days the mourning could not end until one of the relatives managed to secure a human head.

On the third day an observance called *Pana* is made. A plate containing rice and other eatables, as well as a Dyak chopper, an axe, and a cup, are taken by several of the neighbours to the room of the dead person. They go to tell the mourners to weep no more, and to give the dead man food. They enter the room, and one of them

11:Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1957 OC6 Iban OC6

Stage 3: With the third stage came the modelling of the neck of the pot (this being done not with the blade but with the rounded handle of one of the beaters), and the filling out of the body of the pot into a fully rounded shape. The modelling had now become a delicate and intricate process. At the outset (i.e. during Stage 1) Runin had struck the wall of the pot rapidly and with force, but she was now tapping it quite gently and in a slow and measured way. The tapping, it should be remarked, was always down the side of the pot from neck to base, a distance of some six inches covered in eight taps at the rate of about two per second; and as the beater was moved down the other wall the anvil stone was moved down inside the pot immediately beneath the beater and at the same speed. (Plate 10). Again, the pot was now rotated with much greater care, that is about an inch at a time, there being about 17 sets of downward tappings (as just described) to one complete revolution of the pot in about one and a half minutes. After Runin had achieved all that she could by these methods the pot was turned base uppermost so that any imperfections in its shape could be corrected by very light tappings with the plain side of the beater. This was the end of Stage 3; the modelling was now completed and the pot, with an entirely smooth surface, was ready to be decorated.

Stage 4: This last stage began with the decoration of the pot, an over-all, impressed pattern being imparted to its outer surface with the incised face of a beater in the manner already described. This was followed by the removal of the cane ring that had been in place throughout the modelling process. With the blade of a knife Runin made an incision just below the ring, and lifted it clear. The rough edge that remained was sliced down until it became level and was then formed into a rounded lip by Runin's moistened fingers.

The modelling of the five pots had taken Runin about two and three-quarter hours. They were then taken indoors and placed in a rack above the cooking hearth (*dapur*) of Runin's *bilek* so that they might dry out ready for firing.

* * *

Eleven days after the modelling had been completed the pots were—according to Runin—dry enough and ready for the fire. The firewood had been gathered the previous day and was lying

11:Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1957 OC6 Iban OC6

stacked on the terraced bank of the Tiau River about sixty yards from the long-house. At a few minutes after eleven o'clock on the morning of 9th December, 1949, Runin began to construct the simple fire in which her pots were to be baked. The pieces of wood she had gathered averaged about a yard in length and were about as thick as a man's wrist. By stacking these pieces at right angles one to the other and interlocking them, she soon built up a box-like structure about three feet square and some two feet in height. On the top of this the five pots were placed (base down), and then firmly secured with side pieces (Plate 11).

At 11.20 a.m. several burning brands which Inyan had carried down from the long-house were thrust under the bonfire. The wood soon caught and smoke began to rise. Inyan at once handed to Runin a frond of fern, of the kind known to the Iban as *paku ikan*, which she had plucked hastily from the nearby river bank. Grasping the fern frond in her right hand Runin waved it several times over the pots and the burning fire,[13] uttering as she did so a short prayer (*sampi*): (Plate 12)

Nya kami nemu orang parai tadi,
Parai kamari;
Kami nemu orang parai pagila,
Parai lusa.
Ngambi ka enda tekerban,
Enda tejelungan;
Ngambi ka enda buya,
Enda ampa.

There, so we have taken account of those who have died to-day,
Those who died yesterday;
Taken account of those who may die tomorrow,
And on the day after.
May this our undertaking be not fruitless,
Be not a failure;
May it not miscarry,
Or become worthless—like the chaff of *padi*.

For those unacquainted with Iban eschatology this prayer needs a word of explanation. Whenever a member of a long-house dies, Iban custom requires that all the other members of

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11:Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1957 OC6 Iban OC6

[Pa 1660]

(11) The pots in place ready for firing.

(12) A prayer is uttered over the pots and fire.

(13) The tempering fluid being prepared.

342 is used and the men stretch out on the mats, sometimes using mosquito
513 mats and blankets, sometimes merely covering with the ubiquitous sarong
178 (dandong).

342 Although men often claim that the ruai is the place of males in
562 contradistinction to the bilik where the women belong, this division is not evident except on ceremonial occasions. We already have described women's as well as men's activities that are carried out on the ruai, and more will be described below. However, at festivals, these divisions are more apparent when women guests are led straightway to their hostess' bilik, and men are seated on the ruai. The point of the distinction appears to be not so much an effort to keep women off the ruai as to keep men out of the bilik to provide more occasions for social intercourse with members of other families.[11]

342 A row of posts stand at the inner edge of the padong to support the sadau (loft). These posts mark the boundary of the ruai proper, or the area
[592] used as the walkway by the house. Each family bears the responsibility of
[681] keeping the ruai in good repair and, in case of injury resulting from obvious neglect, may be made to pay a fine in addition to repairing the
[927] ruai. Near the posts, smoked heads (antu pala') are hung by families own-
[372] ing them, and below the heads, an earthen hearth (bedilang) is built for

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[11] The man who spends more time in his bilik than is deemed necessary is likely to be chided as laki indu' ("ladies man").

342 727 372 periodic ritual smoking in remembrance of the heads.[12]

The ruai is an important area for ritual activities of the Ibans. 342 796 At the beginning of the horticultural year, the pandong (ritual center, with ceremonial blanket enclosing the seed, whetstone, and utensils to be used) is erected on the ruai. The ruai is the path of the bards (lemanbang) to sebayan (the after-world), and it is the way of the gods into the long-house.

Between the ruai proper and the bilik is the tempuan lesong (mortar's 342 412 235 place), where rice mortars and mills are kept when not in use, hence the name. Firewood is stacked against the dinding udok, and fighting cocks are tethered before the owner's bilik. The tempuan lesong may be demarcated 178 by another row of posts, but in some houses there is no such row. In the modern longhouse of Rumah Nyala, several bilik have long benches attached to the wall and the tempuan lesong has become the sitting area.

3. Sadau

Over each bilik and extending about halfway over the padong ruai 251 is a loft which serves a number of purposes. The most common use of the sadau is as a storage area, where the large bark-bins (tibang) containing the family's rice supply is stored. Hats, baskets, and farm utensils may be stored in the sadau. Some families use the sadau as a sleeping area,

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114 [12] Freeman is right to stress that "these heads (antu pala') are always the property of one particular family, and are never owned by the long-house group as a whole." (Ibid.).

342 secured, either with key-locks or with wooden bars. It is not uncommon for windows or low doors to be cut into the walls between bilik, to allow traffic or communications, the sharing of food or gossip, between close friends or relatives who live next to one another. But when quarrels arise, these openings are closed off.

The sizes of bilik within a longhouse vary according to the number of members in different families, and the relative wealth. At Rumah Nyala, Aup, the largest bilik is 24 feet wide and 56 feet deep. The smallest bilik resulted from the division of a bilik 20 feet wide into two sections because a husband and wife divorced, yet neither could afford to put up a new bilik. A wall was built, partitioning the bilik into two.

The family cooks, eats, sleeps and stores its property in the bilik. [372] Cooking is done on the family hearth (dapor) made of clay or stone and on which iron bars are suspended. Wood is used for fuel, and fed slowly into [262] a fire below the pots placed on the bars. The staple food is boiled rice and supplemented with ferns, greens, salt-fish or fruits as condiments 512 (lauk, engkayu'). Women do the cooking, often rising at 4 a.m. to prepare 264 the morning meal and, during the farming season, enough rice to be taken by [462] workers to the farm for a noonday meal. The lunch (bekal) is commonly taken in a plastic bag by residents nearer to Sibu, but still wrapped in a betel spathe (upih pinang) where such bags are not common. Workers return about dusk, bringing with them any food-stuffs that they have gathered, and the family shares an evening meal at about 7 p.m.